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# Our Heritage from 1776

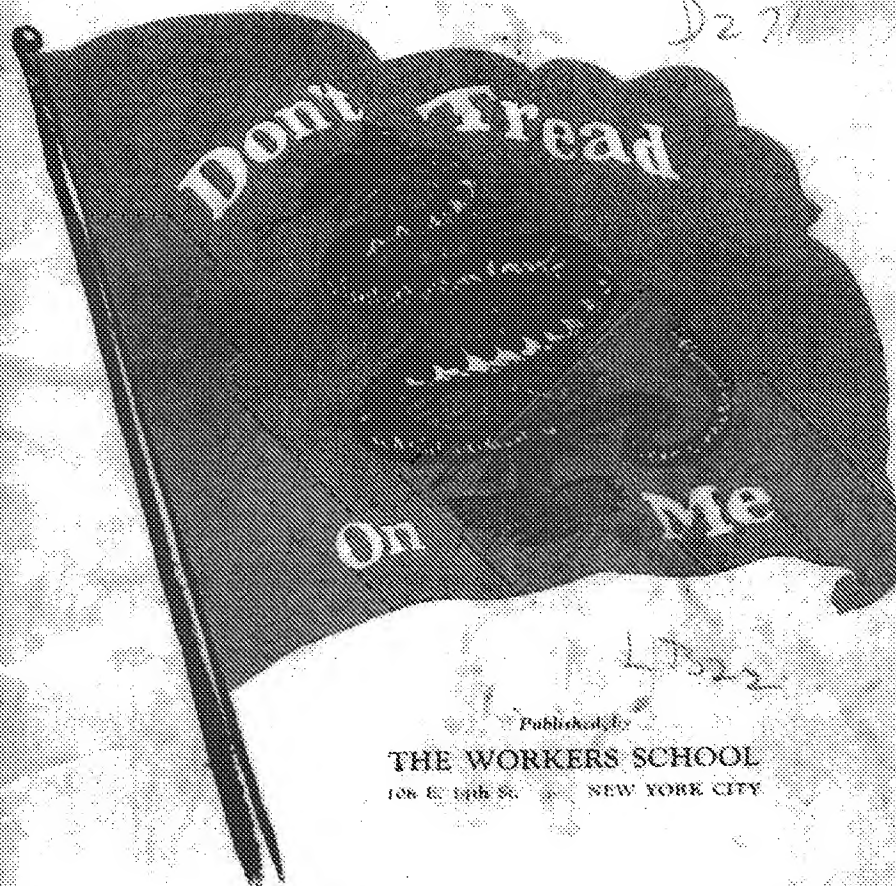
*A Working Class View of the First American Revolution*

by

BERTRAM D. WOLFE

JAY LOVESTONE

WILLIAM F. DUNNE



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## Whose Revolution Is It?

By BERTRAM D. WOLFE

**W**HEN a child comes of age, he has the right to claim his inheritance. And it is a test of the maturity of the working class when it begins to claim its inheritance from past revolutions.

One of the earliest articles of Lenin, written in 1897, concerns itself with this very question. It is entitled: "What Inheritance Do We Reject." It disputes step by step with the Populists the inheritance from past bourgeois revolutionaries. "We are definitely more consistent and truer guardians of the inheritance than the Narodniki (Populists)," he declares, and he then adds. . . "to keep the inheritance by no means signifies that one must limit himself to what he has inherited." This article by the youthful Lenin was a definite declaration that the Russian working class was coming of age and claiming the inheritance that the Decembrists, the "enlighteners" and the earlier generation of Populists had left to it.

### We Claim Our Inheritance.

Judged by this test, the American working class is still immature—still infantile leftist. It does not claim its heritage. It does not dispute with the bourgeoisie, and particularly the pettybourgeoisie (the "back to 1776-ers") for its share in the inheritance of the first American revolution. This year, the Workers (Communist) Party intends to claim this inheritance on behalf of the American working class. It intends to proclaim that our class has come of age and demands its heritage.

This year is the 150th anniversary of the American revolution of 1776. If the average conscious worker is asked whether the American working class should commemorate the anniversary, his answer is an indignant "NO!"

"It was a bourgeois revolution," he will declare. "It created our present capitalist government. The constitution is a capitalist constitution. The Declaration of Independence is bunk. The revolutionary fathers represented the interests of landowners, merchants and capitalists. *It's not our revolution.* It gave the working class nothing but exploitation. We have nothing to commemorate."

Last year the Russian working class celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Decembrist uprising of 1825. The same workers who would condemn the celebration of 1776 by the American workers thought the celebration of the Decembrist uprising right and proper and to a limited extent joined in the celebration. Yet the Decembrist uprising of 1825 in Russia was an uprising of a few nobles and generals. If it had succeeded it would have developed a capitalist government or, more properly speaking, a liberalized feudal government where capitalism could develop more freely.

Again there is the French revolution. It also was a bourgeois revolution. Its leaders outlawed the labor unions. It created the government that rules France to-day in the interest of capitalism and imperialism. Yet not only do the conscious French workers commemorate the revolution of 1789, but even the workers of other countries commemorate it, build upon its achievements and draw revolutionary inspiration and lessons from it.

"We are trying to bring up our youth in the spirit of the deepest respect for the outstanding representatives of the great French revolution," declared Zinoviev in his lectures on the "History of the Russian Communist Party." "We understand their class character. We know that while the revolution sent a monarch to the guillotine, it also enforced laws against labor unions. Nevertheless, these representatives of the great bourgeois revolution were the first shock troops of struggling humanity; they broke thru the dams of feudalism and thereby opened the way to the spring floods of the proletarian revolutions."

The rejection of the heritage of the first American revolution is one of the signs of what Lenin named "infantile leftism." There is a tendency on the part of an immature left wing to "throw out the baby with the bath." To throw out the dirty water of parliamentary opportunism, it dumps out the baby as well—the participation in parliamentary campaigns. Reacting against opportunist platforms, it rejects partial demands altogether. Rejecting the bunk with which the American revolution of 1776 has been surrounded and the uses to which it is put in breeding chauvinism, rejecting also the reactionary slogan of the petty bourgeois liberals—"Back to 1776"—it renounces its revolutionary in-

heritance as well and declares that there is nothing in 1776 which can be carried forward toward 1927 and beyond. Such purely negative reactions to incorrect tactics and programs is a natural and wholesome first reaction of an undeveloped working class. But it must outgrow these reactions if it is to grow up. Hence, in the year 1926, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the first American revolution, it is appropriate that the American working class should "grow up" sufficiently to debunk the history of 1776, throw away the chaff of chauvinism, mystification and reaction and keep and use the wheat of revolutionary traditions and methods and lessons.

### "Debunking" the Revolution

And there is much debunking to be done. The average Fourth of July "celebration" would be better named a "silly-bray-tion." The official orators of the Sesquicentennial will portray the revolutionary fathers as demigods, the revolution as a glorious vindication of the eternal rights of man, the institutions created as classless and eternal and unimprovable.

A first examination of the revolutionary "fathers" reveals them to be for the most part smuggling merchants fighting against the restrictions on trade set by the British government, "bootleg" manufacturers illicitly fabricating and selling articles that the British law forbade them to make or sell, land speculators trying to lay their hands on land which belonged to the British Crown or which had been awarded to Canada by the Quebec acts, men of wealth and affluence who continued to own slaves after "all men were created free and equal." The eternal rights of man prove to be the class interests of certain classes struggling for dominance as against another set of dominant classes. The glorious phrases of the Declaration of Independence to the effect that "all government rests upon the consent of the governed" did not prevent the rulers of the newly freed land from continuing the property and other qualifications for suffrage and putting over a constitution illegally and secretly drafted by the consent only of a small minority of those who were to be governed under it. If the right of the "pursuit of happiness" which the Declaration declares inalienable still

stands, it is because "pursuing" does not necessarily mean catching up. If, in the pursuit of your happiness, you find that you have to picket a shop, you may find that your "inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness" may be taken away from you also.

But in this the revolution of 1776 is no exception to other bourgeois revolutions of which Engels wrote: "We know today that this kingdom of reason was nothing more than the idealized kingdom of the bourgeoisie; that this Eternal Right found its realization in bourgeois justice; that this equality reduced itself to bourgeois equality before the law; that bourgeois property was proclaimed as one of the essential rights of man; and that the government of reason. . . . came into being and could only come into being, as a democratic bourgeois republic. The great thinkers of the eighteenth century could not. . . . go beyond the limits imposed upon them by their epoch."

But as soon as we have said that the Revolution of 1776 was a class revolution which produced certain class institutions and which made many promises which it did not and could not fulfill, then we have cleared the ground for a closer examination of the real nature of the revolution, the things it achieved and the things it represents.

### Causes of the Revolution.

The dominant class in England at the time of the Revolution of 1776 held to the mercantilist economic theory that colonies exist to produce raw materials for the mother country and to provide markets for its manufactured goods. During the latter part of the colonial period a whole series of laws were adopted by Parliament regulating the shipping trade and manufactures of the colonies in such a way as to foster the commercial and business interests of England. The Navigation Acts, framed for the purpose of building up the British merchant marine and navy, gave a monopoly of colonial commerce to British ships. The Factory Acts forbade the manufacture of hats, woolens and iron, and the exportation of such manufactured articles. The Trade Laws compelled the colonists to export certain goods to England only, and to purchase certain other things only in England. Prohibitive taxes were placed upon other articles when not imported from Eng-



land. Thus the revolution was in the first place a revolt against a whole series of laws which limited the productivity of the colonies, denied them the right to manufacture what they pleased, to buy where they could buy most cheaply, to sell where they could sell most profitably, and to produce, ship and trade without restriction. As in all revolutions the existing framework of government and social structure in the interest of certain British classes had become a fetter upon further development of the productive forces of the new world and the fetters had to be broken if social progress was to continue.

James O Neal in his "Workers in American History" dismisses the leaders in the struggle against these laws as "smugglers." That they were smugglers there is no doubt. Lalor's "Encyclopedia of Political and Social Science" rightly declares: "Nine-tenths of their merchants were smugglers. One quarter of all the signers of the Declaration of Independence were bred to. . . . the contraband trade. . . . Hancock was the prince of the contraband traders, and with John Adams as his counsel was appointed for trial before the admiralty court of Boston at the exact hour of the shedding of blood at Lexington." Yet it must not be overlooked that this smuggling was a violation of laws which hindered the further development of production in America and that by their secret and open struggle against these laws they were fighting for social progress.

A second cause of the American revolution was the limitation on western land sales. The thin strip of coastal settlements that made up the thirteen colonies was destined to spread over a whole continent. But the British king, backed by certain interests in America, was for limiting the settlements to the coast where they could be more easily controlled, more easily taxed and regulated, and whereby a cheap supply of labor would be assured (since laborers could not leave for unoccupied lands) and whereby the price of coast lands would go up in value since the supply of land was limited. Laws were passed forbidding purchase of land from the Indians (in the name of protection of the Indians) and granting the Western lands to Canada.

James O Neal dismisses the opponents of these acts as "land

speculators." He points out, and rightly, that Washington, Hamilton and Morris were interested in land speculation and that "Washington had good reasons for being a rebel, as he surveyed lands outside of the royal grant and in exceeding the powers of his commission was liable to prosecution as a law breaker." But he does not point out at the same time that the poor frontiersmen, the pioneers who occupied small farms on the Western frontier and who made up the bulk of the army of the revolution, were also interested in fighting these laws. And as "squatters" who had occupied land in defiance of the laws, they were also "land thieves." These land thieves and speculators were also fighting the battle of progress against laws that put fetters upon the development of the productive forces of the colonies.

A third cause of the revolution was the paper money question. During the French and Indian wars British merchants had sent over large quantities of goods on credit and rich planters, importers and merchants in America were all debtors to British merchants. These classes had been fighting against the issue of cheap paper money as a means of settling on easy terms the debts of the colonial poor but now that they were debtors they united to issue large quantities of paper currency. The British merchants succeeded in passing a law limiting and prohibiting this practice. This cause, generally ignored by orthodox historians because it shows the revolutionary fathers trying to escape paying their debts, was one of the prime causes of the American revolution and, like the land issue, united rich and poor alike in a common cause.

A fourth cause of the revolution was objection to British taxation. "Taxation without representation" was undoubtedly a fraudulent slogan. It was not the intention of those who raised it to give representation to everybody who paid taxes. What they objected to was the size of the taxes, the articles on which they were levied, the objectives of the taxes in placing restrictions on trade in "niggers," rum, molasses, indentured servants (stamp tax) and other commodities, and the purpose of the taxes—to make the royal governors independent of the colonial legislatures by paying their salaries out of royal taxes in place of legislative grants. In one case, they even objected to the lowering of a tax—the tax on



tea—because it enabled the British East India Company to undersell the tea smugglers. The Boston Tea party was nothing but the dumping overboard of the tea in question.

Taken all together the British laws for the governing of the colonies and their exploitation in the interest of certain British wealthy and ruling classes hampered the industrial life of the colonies and fettered the further development of the productive forces of America. Further industrial evolution was impossible without revolution. So revolution had to come—and it came. This disposes of all the current bunk about America being "un-revolutionary," of the American method being "not revolution but evolution," of the natural unnaturalness of revolutionary methods to the Anglo-Saxon and all the other master-class twaddle that masquerades as sociology and history.

#### A Minority Revolution.

All the available evidence tends to prove that the revolutionaries were a minority of the population. Most of the "aristocracy," the large land-owners of the coast with the exception of the plantation owners of the South, almost all office-holders, the clergy of the Church of England, the more eminent lawyers and physicians, and the "legitimate" merchants—large merchants who did no smuggling—these were the active Tories or royalists. The Tory party included, in the words of the historian Jameson, "more than half of the most educated, wealthy and hitherto respected classes." With them was a great indifferent mass having no great interest in change. They provided over 25,000 colonial troops to the British army. The active revolutionists were the smuggling merchants, manufacturers and speculators in western land, backed by the small farmers, frontiersmen and artisans, who were won to their cause by such issues as paper money and thru the glittering and vague promises of the Declaration of Independence.

How could the minority of the population which made up the revolutionary army fight against the combined forces of a more or less equal number of active counter-revolutionaries and the British regular troops more numerous and better equipped and supplemented by hired Hessian soldiers?

Dr. Ramsay, a contemporary of the revolution, writing of North Carolina, says: "There was an ardor and an enthusiasm in the friends of Congress that was generally wanting in the advocates of royal government." A rising social class whose victory means social progress always has "an ardor and enthusiasm" generally lacking in the counter-revolutionists.

This in part explains the victory of the rebels.

If the American colonists were divided, the inhabitants of the mother country were also. The Whigs (party of the new merchant-manufacturer class) in England were fighting against King George and his system of government. Pitt and Burke and Fox and a host of other major statesmen opposed the colonial policy and supported the revolutionists. Lord Howe, who commanded the British troops in America during the first critical years of the revolution, was an avowed Whig and when it was too late was recalled and tried for treason because he abandoned Boston to George Washington, made no effort to come in time to the relief of Burgoyne at Saratoga, and did not try to crush Washington's miserable, ill-equipped little army after repeatedly defeating it in New York and New Jersey. "Throughout the revolution the favorite toast at banquets of American officers was 'General Howe'."

During the latter years of the revolution, France, Spain and Holland came to the aid of the American forces, the revolutionists having managed to utilize not only differences in the British ruling classes but also conflicts of interest between England and other countries as well in the strategy of the revolting colonials. There is a little "Leninist" lesson in winning alliances for a revolution.

#### A Revolutionary Revolution.

Finally, the revolution succeeded above all because it was truly "revolutionary" in its methods. "The people who write histories," says S. G. Fisher in his "True History of the American Revolution," "are usually of the class who take the side of the government in a revolution; and as Americans, they are anxious to believe that our revolution was different from others, more decorous, and altogether free from the atrocities, mistakes, and absurdities which characterize even the patriot party in a revolution. They have accordingly tried to describe a revolution in which *all* *scholarly, re-*

*finer and conservative* persons might have unhesitatingly taken part; but such revolutions have never been known to happen."

The truth of the matter is that our revolution of 1776 was carried out as a class dictatorship with all the accompaniments of force and revolutionary terror that the ruling class historians of today attack in the case of Soviet Russia and that the polite liberals deplore.

### Dictatorship

All revolutions create alongside of the regularly constituted government their own unconstitutional, extra-legal revolutionary authority that unites the revolutionists, mobilizes their forces for resistance to the legal authority and forms the germ of the future government if the revolution succeeds. In the bourgeois revolutions of the continent these "dual authorities," as Lenin called them, were the clubs of Girondins and Jacobins in the French revolution and the clubs of workers in the revolutions of 1848. In the Russian revolution the revolutionary authority that challenged the legally constituted government is to be found in the Workers' and Peasants' Councils or Soviets.

In the American Revolution of 1776 the dual or revolutionary authority was to be found first in the Committees of Correspondence and then in their national delegate bodies called Congresses. The Committees of Correspondence were small, local, unofficial groups of revolutionaries, formed to develop and unite resistance on an all-colonial scale against objectionable British measures. They held meetings, sent out emissaries, carried on correspondence, supervised the boycott of British goods, tarred and feathered and otherwise punished those who broke the boycott or who informed on smugglers or other violators of British law, carried on a constant propaganda and in the later period mobilized and drilled volunteers and secretly gathered supplies of ammunition and developed a spy system to reveal the movements of British troops. They are analogous to the provincial clubs of the French Revolution or to the local Soviets of the Russian Revolution. From another standpoint, they correspond to locals or sections of a revolutionary political party. They acted as the unifying vanguard of the revolutionary forces.

As the revolutionary movement developed and the day of open revolt approached, they chose delegates to national "congresses." The first of these was the Stamp Act Congress called to plan resistance to the tax known as the Stamp Act. Of this Congress the historian Beard rightly says:

"The Stamp Act Congress was more than an assembly of protest. It marked the rise of a new agency of Government to express the will of America. It was THE GERM OF A GOVERNMENT WHICH IN TIME WAS TO SUPERSEDE THE GOVERNMENT OF GEORGE III. IN THE COLONIES."

This is reminiscent of the words of Marx:

"And the clubs, what were they but a coalition of the entire working class against the entire bourgeois class, the formation of a workers' state against the bourgeois state. . . . so many constituent assemblies of the proletariat and as many detachments of an army of revolt ready for action?"

As to suffrage, there was no pretense of letting anybody vote for these committees of correspondence and congresses *except revolutionaries*, just as exploiters and counter-revolutionaries were not permitted to vote for delegates to the Soviet congresses. On this Beard says:

"Such agencies were duly formed by the choice of men favoring the scheme, all opponents being excluded from the elections."

The committees of correspondence and Congresses also "passed laws" and the committees executed them by a sort of summary or revolutionary justice which is technically known as "revolutionary terror."

Every one of the "horrors" of the Russian revolution were repeated, including some of which the Russian revolution was innocent. The land and property of the loyalists was confiscated without indemnity. As to freedom of the press:

"Loyalists or Tories who were bold enough to speak and write against the Revolution were suppressed and their pamphlets burned. . . . A few Tories were hanged without trial, and others were tarred and feathered (this is a peculiar American sport.—B. D. W.). One was placed upon a cake of ice and held there "until his loyalty to King George might cool." Whole families were driven out of their homes. . . . Thousands were blacklisted and subjected to espionage. . . . Those who refused (to support the revolution.—B. D. W.) were promptly branded as outlaws, while some of the more dangerous were thrown into jail. . . ." (Beard.)

All loyalists were driven out of the State Legislatures much as Cromwell "purged" the Long Parliament, as the Jacobins drove out the delegates of the Girondins or as the Bolsheviks expelled the

counter-revolutionaries from the Constituent Assembly. It seems that the methods of all revolutions are alike—revolutionary.

In this connection it is interesting to hear the testimony of a very conservative historian, Dr. James Sullivan, Assistant Commissioner of Education of the State of New York. Speaking at Columbia University recently, he said:

"Just as at present we are wont to speak with a kind of horror of the Soviets of Russia without realizing that our own committees of correspondence during the Revolution were almost counterparts of the present Russian system. . . . outside of the executions, for practically two-thirds of the revolutionary period our Soviets ruled with much the same cruelty, rigor and summary justice that the modern Russian Soviet has practiced."

We can pardon Dr. Sullivan his little weakness as to executions (in Russia they are called executions, in the United States "lists of the slain in battle") in view of his unusual clarity in political analysis. In spite of his proviso as to executions, he was roundly hissed by his respectable audience, as the *New York Times* reported.

### The Results of the Revolution.

It is false to pretend, as many working class writers do, that the American revolution of 1776, since it did not live up to the glowing promises of the Declaration of Independence, did not accomplish anything. I can only briefly list a few of the results in an article that is already too long. The revolution freed the colonies from England, freed the western land for settlement and thereby raised the standard of living of the colonials, broke the fetters upon the expansion of production and released the gigantic productive forces that are now at hand for social use when the workers take them, lessened to a limited extent the area of slavery, made the first weak steps in lightening the laws against debtors, disestablished the Church and introduced greater religious toleration in many of the colonies, effected a much wider and more democratic distribution of the land than had existed previously, extended the suffrage slightly altho the property qualification for voting was not finally abolished in all states until after 1840, forced the Bill of Rights into the American Constitution, set up a republican form of government which for its day was the most advanced, and served as a revolutionary inspiration to the European bourgeoisie in the French revolution.

What it did not do, it is needless to recount, except by way of debunking the nonsense of the capitalist apologists who pretend that it did everything that any "sane" man can desire. It did not do what a bourgeois revolution can not be expected to do. It did not free the wage slaves. It did not even free the chattel slaves. It did not keep all its fine promises. It did not introduce even "complete" bourgeois democracy (there is no such thing as complete bourgeois democracy). It did not abolish classes. It did not introduce socialism. It was only the *first* American revolution.

#### Whose Revolution Is It?

Whose revolution is it? The master class of today rejects it. They shudder at its revolutionary methods and conceal them. They reject its revolutionary traditions. They violate the Bill of Rights, calumniate or falsify its most advanced leadership, distort and disfigure its men and its acts. They are ashamed of its methods and its traditions.

A socialist speaker in New York was arrested in 1918 for publicly reading the provisions of the Constitution which guarantee freedom of speech and press. A Communist speaker in Pittsburgh who tried to read the Declaration of Independence was pulled in. "I didn't write that," he protested to the policeman, "Thomas Jefferson wrote it."

"Well, I'll pull you in first," answered the cop, "and then I'll go back and get this here guy Thomas Jefferson."

The bourgeoisie is arresting the revolutionists of 1776 and rejecting its heritage!

Whose revolution is it? I maintain that it is our revolution. The working class of today is the inheritor of all past ages. It does not reject the past. It takes what is good from the past and upon it builds the future. We need not go abroad for all of our revolutionary traditions. Some of them at least we can find in a body of American tradition. We are the inheritors and defenders of the Bill of Rights today. The bourgeoisie does not need, does not desire freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly. We as a revolutionary class struggling for power become defenders of those freedoms. We are the inheritors and defenders of the right of revolution to change a government that has become



obnoxious and tyrannical. In a single sentence that is all that is declared in the Declaration of Independence. We should salvage and utilize the traditions of dictatorship and revolutionary struggle that the revolution has bequeathed and that the bourgeoisie rightly rejects. There is a tradition of struggle against "tyrannical" laws, there is a tradition of struggle against a system that fetters the further development of the forces of production and the further progress of society.

#### The Left Wing in the American Revolution.

And finally there is the left wing. As in the French Revolution, as in every revolution, not all of the revolutionaries are the same. The leaders of 1776 range all the way from the aristocratic Washington and the monarchical Hamilton (the Mellon of his day), thru the democratic Franklin and Jefferson and the free-thinker, Tom Paine, to the champion of the poor farmers and imprisoned debtors, Daniel Shays, who started a new revolution against the newly formed government as soon as he had helped complete the old against King George. We can say with Zinoviev:

*"We understand their class character. . . . Nevertheless these representatives of the great bourgeois revolution were the first shock troops of struggling humanity; they broke thru the dams of feudalism (imperialist-feudalism in this case) and thereby opened the way to the spring floods of the proletarian revolution."*

#### Discover America.

This year, on the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the American revolution of 1776 it is time that the American working-class began to "discover America" and its body of native revolutionary traditions. It is time that we "grew up" and like the youthful Lenin disputed with the bourgeoisie for our heritage. We are the revolutionaries of our day and they the counter-revolutionists. In the words of Lenin we can say: "We are definitely more consistent and truer guardians of the inheritance than you." And to the "back to 1776-ers," the Norman Thomases and LaFollettes, we can add in the words of Lenin: *"To keep the inheritance by no means signifies that one must limit himself to what he has inherited."*

"Back to nothing", we can answer. "We use the past to build the future, not to block the present. Forward to Communism. . ."

After all it is only the *first* American Revolution. . . .

## On the Fourth of July

By JAY LOVESTONE.

**P**RIOR to this year we communists in America called the day on which the Declaration of Independence was signed, July fourth. It occupied just the same place ideologically, politically, that July fifth, or sixth, or June thirtieth did. Until 1925 it had very little significance as a historic day for us.

This is the first time that we speak of "the Fourth of July." This day assumes a real significance for us.

We must guard against any Americanization craze. In the bourgeois sense of the word, Americanization is a very dangerous thing. In the bolshevik sense of the word, Americanization at once affords a hope for the future and practical results in the present.

To speak of Americanizing our Party in the bolshevik sense of the word, means to speak of the Party adopting tactics based on the objective conditions in America. Examination of these objective conditions will indicate that historical traditions much as they appear to the superficial observer as abstract forces, are in reality very concrete elements, very substantial phases of the objective conditions at hand and transmitted.

The American bourgeoisie have always prided themselves on saying that there are no classes in the United States, never have been, and never can be. The history of America, like the history of any other country, is the history of class struggle. The first American Revolution is a gigantic class struggle. If we scratch the surface of the historical evidence of the first American Revolution, we will find that the civil war was a class war. This Revolution grew out of conflict of economic class interests. It was not a single event; it was the climax of a series of events.

It is not my purpose to describe any battles or skirmishes or deal with the military disasters or victories of the contending forces of the first American Revolution. Such investigations are relatively unimportant for the American workers in 1925. What is timely for us at this time is to trace certain facts of the first American Revolution, to see what lessons we can draw from this tremendously significant historical event and to see how the experiences of our

forefathers stack up in the light of the estimates of these experiences given by our bourgeoisie. More than that, what is most valuable for us is to compare the tactics, the practices and activities of the American masses and their leaders in 1776 with the advice now being given to the American workers by those whom they still, unfortunately in the main, recognize as leaders to-day.

Much ink is being spilled by the robed, untitled and well-paid defenders of the present system in their attacks on the opponents of the capitalist order. These apologists of the exploiting class are shouting against the revolutionists. They are yelling against a dictatorship by the proletariat. They are ranting against the use of force. They say that is foreign, that is un-American. They are yelling from the housetops against the American workers having anything to do with other workers from the different countries in their struggles against the bosses. The official historians and editors of our ruling class are working overtime propagating the idea that the present form of the American government is eternal, and that it affords the workers of this country an opportunity in pursuit of life, liberty and happiness.

Let us examine these "eternal truths" that are hurled so gratuitously by the exploiters at the workingman.

It ill becomes the defenders of the bourgeois class which is a small minority of our population to speak of the sanctity, of the inviolability of majority rule. American democracy to-day is the most crass, tho in spots well camouflaged, expression of minority rule in the interests of a minority, at the costly expense of the vast majority of the population, in the world.

The American workers can very well draw inspiration on the question of majority and minority from the experiences of the first American Revolution. The workers and exploited farmers of this country are the overwhelming majority of this country. But in view of the fact that the capitalists who are a small minority are speaking so much against the Communist Party because it frankly says that the proletarian revolution at the outset may be initiated by a minority in the interests of the great majority, it is worth while to analyze the background of the first American Revolution for extremely valuable lessons.

At the time of the first American Revolution the Patriots (those who were against the government) were in a minority. The Loyalists (those who were for the then existing government) were numerically very strong. The conscious supporters of the government at that time were at least a third of the entire colonial population. They formed a majority in such important colonies as New York, South Carolina, and Pennsylvania. It is estimated that at least 100,000 persons who were for maintaining the government existing then in America, were exiled by the revolutionists. Their property was confiscated. They were tarred and feathered and they were treated much more roughly in many respects than the Czarists who were for maintaining the old reactionary government in Russia were by the Bolsheviks. The Communists of to-day can learn many lessons from the American Revolutionists of 1776 in treatment of counter revolutionists, of Loyalists, of Tories. The noted historian, Adams, in his book "New England in the Revolution" declares that "More colonials served in the Imperial than the Revolutionary army." He further says, "If we accept the estimate that at the beginning of the war one third of the people were in favor of independence, a third of the people were opposed to it, and one third indefinite, it is evident that two thirds could not have been counted upon to sustain the Patriots' (revolutionists, those against the government) side with any ardor."

#### Force and Violence.

American workers have been sent to jail for defending themselves against the terrorism of the existing Tory government in the United States. Many states have passed laws which provide for severe jail penalties, and years of imprisonment to be visited upon any worker who dares even insinuate in the most indirect manner that the workers and poor farmers have a right to defend themselves against the brutalities of their exploiters.

In this light it is interesting to recall the declaration of the Continental Congress of 1774, which so forcefully declared:

"We are reduced to the alternative of choosing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated masters, or RESISTANCE BY FORCE. THE LATTER IS OUR CHOICE. We have counted the cost of the contest, and nothing is so dreadful as voluntary slavery."

No more inspiring words have been uttered for American workers by any Communist section of the world.

Let us go on to listen to one of the leaders of the American Revolution, Tom Paine. Incidentally, we should remark that Tom Paine has been much underestimated by the bourgeois historians and has been much neglected. These classic words of Tom Paine mean very much to American workers today. We should think very seriously of what Tom Paine meant when he said:

"By referring the matter (the grievance against the British ruling class) from arguments to arms, a new point for politics is struck. All plans, preparations, etc., prior to the 19th of April (the battle of Lexington), are like almanacs of last year."

Let the American workers think of Ludlow, Calumet, the Bisbee deportations, the slavery in the mining sections, the tyranny in the steel regions, in the light of these meaningful words of Paine.

### The Form of Government

We can understand why the American capitalists today are shuddering at the word dictatorship. When they hear the word dictatorship uttered by workers they know that it means the dictatorship of the workers to supplant the present dictatorship of exploiters. When the bourgeois apologists speak of the holiness of the present form of government they try to make us believe that the people living in America have always had the same form of government, that this present form of government is immutable, that it has eternal blessings for the masses.

Our revolutionary forefathers, when they decided to destroy the domination of the British ruling class, did not put much faith in the then existing governmental institutions under which they were living. Our forefathers decided to set up their own governmental apparatus. The first thing they did was to clean out the courts, which then, as now, were the bulwark of the reactionaries, the Tories (those who were loyal to the existing government).

In a letter which Lord Dunmore, governor of Virginia, wrote to Lord Dartmouth, dated December 24, 1774, he gave a description of the governmental apparatus set up by the revolutionists to displace the existing government. He said:

"A committee is chosen in every county to carry the Association of the Congress into execution. They inspect the trade and correspondence of every merchant; watch the conduct of every inhabitant; may send for, catechise and stigmatize him if he does not appear to follow the instructions of their Congress. Every city, town, is arming an independent company to protect their committee and to be employed

against the government, should occasion require. Not a Justice of the peace acts except as a committeeman. Abolishing the courts of Justice was the first step taken."

The American revolutionists set up a very effective dictatorship to uproot all those loyal to the government of the exploiters and oppressors at that time. Anybody who did not declare himself on the side of the revolution was treated roughly. Even before the Declaration of Independence was issued, Connecticut declared that there should be no more freedom of speech for those who were loyal to the government and against the revolution. Those loyal to the government were not allowed to get together. Such privileges were accorded to them in cases where they were attending funerals, and then they were watched carefully by the committees of safety which were set up by the revolutionists. Those loyal to the government were completely disarmed.

The first American revolution also set up a very effective "cheka" for weeding out Tory elements. Let us see how this "cheka" of 1776 worked in Massachusetts, the state which has given us that flower of all Americans—Coolidge.

"In Massachusetts it was provided that a meeting of the inhabitants of each town might be called, at which a strong patriot should be chosen as chairman. Any citizen present at the meeting might give him the name of anyone suspected of Tory sympathies and, if a majority present voted affirmatively, the person named was arrested and tried at the next session of court. If convicted, he was shipped as soon as possible, AT HIS OWN EXPENSE, to Europe or the West Indies."

Those refusing to accept allegiance to the revolutionary government and continuing their loyalty to the overthrown government were put into jail, kept there forty days and later deported, in many cases to some part of the British dominions. And if any of those loyal to the government returned the penalty awaiting them was: "Death without benefit of clergy."

#### "Foreigners" Help American Revolution.

A lot of talk is now going the rounds about "Bolshevik money," about money from other countries, to help finance the revolution in America. This is sheer nonsense. The only ones in America who have seen Bolshevik gold or gotten any money from the Soviet government are such capitalists of the type of Henry Ford. Revolutions are not created artificially. Revolutions must grow out of the objective conditions in the country. Still it is very instructive



to note the role foreign money played in insuring the success of the first American revolution. The French government spent at least 25,000,000 francs in financing the American revolution, to overthrow the government existing in America in 1776. It has been said by no less an authority than Admiral Mahan that the American revolution was really won on the high seas in the naval battles between the fleets of Spain and France on one side and Great Britain on the other.

Professor Edgerton has well summed up the role of foreign governments in helping bring the first American revolution to a successful conclusion when he said: "The war had lasted long enough for clear-headed Americans to recognize the extreme difficulty of bringing it to a successful conclusion without foreign allies."

The French fleet and French soldiers had much to do with the surrender of Cornwallis (defending the existing government) to Washington, champion of the revolutionary government.

Yes, our American bourgeoisie to-day would not like to confess to the workers that it was largely thru the alliance of our American forefathers with "foreigners," largely thru the use of "foreign" money that the first revolution was a success and that a goodly portion of the foundation for the development of capitalism in the United States to its present heights was thus laid.

### Cheating the Workers

The workers paid for and fought the revolutionary war.

The workers took seriously the slogan of the right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. While the wealthy stayed at home, or often hired substitutes to fight for them, the workers, the mechanics, the poor farmers had to go to the front. The suffering of the soldiers at Valley Forge defies description. At the same time the rich were waxing fat on fabulous war profits. Many of the leaders of the revolutionary movement in 1776 preached radical doctrines to the workers, but these leaders failed to put these doctrines into practice except against the British ruling class. Adams summed up the situation very well when he said:

"The petty aristocracy of clergy, loyalists, and merchants scorned the poor, had no belief in their political wisdom and at the same time was thrown into periodic panics on account of fear of them. It was all very well when the common people were to be guided to action

and was . . . to talk about all men being created equal and of the rights of all to the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, but once the war was won, the old doctrine of the superior rights of the well-born to govern and the superior sanctity of their property came once more to the fore.

"The people had been under the delusion that they had fought an eight years' war for the rights of man and at the time of the formation of the constitution many towns objected strenuously to this further limitation of the franchise. Dorchester claimed that men might be 'useful and respectable members of society' even if they did not possess £50."

The Washingtons and the Hamiltons tried their hardest to stop the revolutionary movement from proceeding further and from altering the relationship of classes, yet it was an alteration of the class relationships in favor of the common people which was the outstanding feature of the revolutionary war propaganda.

Since the first American revolution the history of the United States has been a history of the struggles of the masses for an alteration in the class relationships.

The first phase of the American revolution was not really complete until the election of Jefferson. Jefferson, it must be remembered, was the spokesman of the workers and the poorer farmers. Hamilton, his chief opponent, was the leader of the Federalists, the big commercial interests which desired the establishment of a strongly centralized government, a national bank, higher tariff, an army, a navy, and even talked for some time of establishing an American titled aristocracy. For weeks the first senate was debating as to the title that should be given to the president and how the senators should be addressed.

The decisive vote for Jefferson in the college of electors was cast by one who served a four-month jail term for violating the sedition law passed by the Federalists against the working and farming masses.

With the victory of the North over the South in the Civil War the hegemony of the American bourgeoisie over all other classes was complete. Since the continuation of the Civil War the American capitalists have been consolidating their hold on the resources, industries and government of the United States. But since then there has also been developing a definite proletariat. The proletarianization of the United States has been increasing at an accelerating pace since 1893—the time marking roughly the disappearance of free land and the establishment of the basis for capitalist

monopolist control of the basic resources of the country. The struggle waged in the first revolution must be continued by the American workers to-day. The American workers have splendid traditions to live up to. Comrade Lenin has well pointed that out some time ago. Our traditions of struggle in the first American Civil War in 1776, in the second American Civil War in 1861, in the subsequent heroic battles against the railroad capitalists, the coal kings, and the oil barons affords plenty of inspiration.

On this day marking the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence from those who exploited our forefathers in 1776 it is time for us to think very seriously of the necessary steps to be taken for signing a new Declaration of Independence—a Declaration of Independence from our exploiters to-day.

We can proudly tread the paths beaten by our revolutionary forefathers. They can teach us much. Let us learn from them.

(Reprinted from "The Daily Worker")

## Uphold the Revolutionary Tradition

By WILLIAM F. DUNNE.

**THE FOURTH OF JULY** is the anniversary of the decision of the American colonists to secure by any and all means, at the price of war and death if need be, their freedom from the English monarchy and establish themselves as a nation.

The tradition of the United States of America in this respect is a revolutionary tradition. More than that, it is a revolutionary tradition of which the workers and farmers of America are the bearers because it was the oppressed, descendants of the English, Irish, Scotch and Dutch peasantry which had been beggared first by the breakdown of feudalism and on whose backs were laid the unbearable burdens of a rising capitalism, who made up the revolutionary armies, who fought, starved and died for American independence only to be thrown into debtors' prisons and have the felon's brand placed on them when the revolutionary war had ended.

The "founding fathers" were the early aristocrats who took to themselves the fruits of the revolutionary struggle and representatives of the landlord, trading and commercial groups who held and drove to labor from sunup to sundown black and white slaves—the nucleus of the modern American workingclass.

The farmers and workers got nothing from the war for independence. What progress they have made as a class since that time has been made in the face of the most determined resistance on the part of the exploiting class which seeks now to disguise and distort the history of the revolutionary struggle.

As in France, where the fall of the Bastille marked the rise of the third estate—the trading and commercial class to power—but was achieved by the bloody sacrifices which the young workingclass laid on the altar of freedom, so in America the revolutionary war, fought by workers and farmers, marks the opening of what appears as an endless lane of opportunity for the exploiters of the masses to consolidate and increase their wealth and power.

We are proud of the part our class played in the stern struggle for independence and we say that the truth about 1776, the truth

about the revolutionary period, both before and *after* the war for independence was over, shall conquer the lies of the present American ruling class.

The United States, like all other capitalist nations, has been built by workers and farmers. It is theirs and they should take it.

Every Fourth of July celebration should be the occasion for strengthening the revolutionary tradition of this nation which the workers and farmers alone can carry out to its final and inevitable conclusion—a workers' and farmers' government.

(The above is an excerpt from an editorial in "The Daily Worker" of July 4, 1926.)

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